

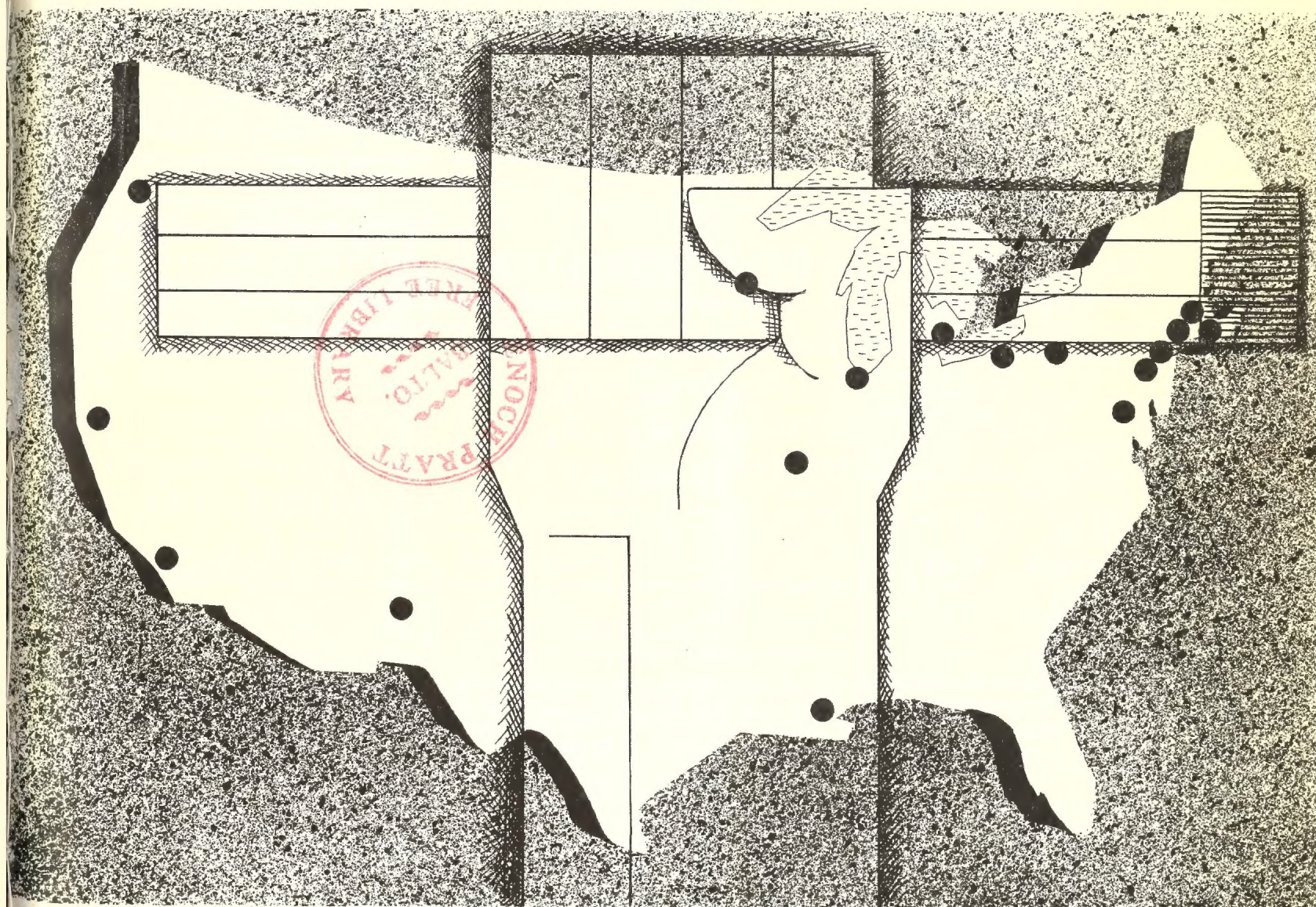
# ART FRONT

JUNE

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Joseph Gower

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IN THIS ISSUE: FULL REPORT OF THE EASTERN DISTRICT CONVENTION • WAR AND FASCISM BY LIND WARD • ARTISTS AS ILLUSTRATORS • THE UNION SHOW • POST SURREALIST • THE INDEPENDENT'S TWENTIETH ANNUAL • ART BY GOWER • OLEY NEEL • PFEUFER • CLEMENTS • DIENER • KRUCKMAN • SKINNER



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Midwestern artists' unions and artists organizations are sending delegates to this meeting to discuss the economic problems confronting the artists. For all information address

SIDNEY LOEB, Secretary, Chicago, A. U.  
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The next issue of ART FRONT will carry reports of this conference.

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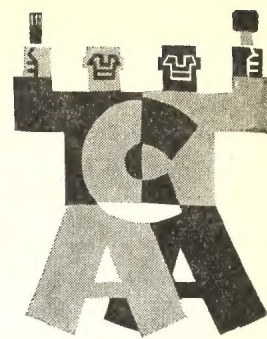
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# ART FRONT

JUNE 1936



## MASS MEETING

**T**HIS is an election year and political events move with an accelerated pace. A mass meeting was called April 24 by the entire Federal Art Project for the purpose of uniting all Federal Art Locals into a single local of the C.P.C. This re-organization was planned to prevent layoffs and to fight for a Permanent Art Project.

In the meantime things were happening in Washington. Relief needs have been increasing while re-employment is practically at a standstill. Sales and processing taxes have hit the wage-earner a heavy blow. It is clear that it is not expedient, even if possible, to squeeze more from the masses. They bore the brunt of the depression. They are bearing the brunt of "recovery." Large funds must be raised to continue to feed the millions of destitute. These funds can be raised only by stiffer taxes on high incomes and high profits. The Tories are making a desperate effort to stave off the evil day. By lopping off the major sums needed for relief and balancing the budget they hope to preclude the possibility of touching their pocketbooks at all.

As a result of this situation, a move originated in Congress to throw the whole Federal Arts program to the tender mercies of the states. There they anticipate the collapse of the projects. And they are right. This *would* mean the end of the projects! The states are unprepared financially to meet this load in the face of increased needs for direct relief. Furthermore, they are *unwilling* to assume this additional burden.

Local political skullduggery would soon render the projects incapable of rendering socially useful work. A problem necessitating long time planning would be reduced to a month to month basis depending entirely on political expediency of the grossest sort. The four Federal Arts Projects could not long survive this treatment.

The present relief mess in New Jersey

gave added point to the significance of this proposed transfer.

Recognizing the urgency of meeting this issue, and confronted with the necessity of immediate action, the meeting originally scheduled was postponed and in its place a mass meeting was held of the Art, Drama, Music and Writers' Projects under the auspices of the C.P.C. The other Artists' Unions were contacted and similar meetings were held in different sections of the country. Telegrams were sent to Washington from these meetings. Spokesmen from each project acquainted the membership with the situation. After a summation of the situation by Willis Morgan, President of the C.P.C., in which he pointed out the low cost of production for the four projects, the following resolution were passed:

1. To send letters and telegrams of protest against the proposed transfer to Congressmen, Hopkins and the press;
2. To organize action on the projects for W.P.A. expansion;
3. To hold a mass meeting of all W.P.A. organizations at Madison Square for W.P.A. expansion;
4. The sending of delegates to Washington to protest the proposed transfer, the delegation to consist of two delegates from each Federal Arts Project and two from the C.P.C.

## A UNION ORGANIZER IS FIRED

**I**N THE last week of April the Executive Secretary of the Artists' Union of Boston, James Pfeufer, was fired from the easel project of that city. He was charged with incompetence as a painter. The Boston union sent a delegation at once to see State Supervisor Frank H. Sterner, who further, retaliated with a series of vicious statements. The press of that date reports Sterner as saying, "He declared that of the 70 members of the Artists' Union but five of them are artists. He described the work of one of them as an obviously poor attempt to

imitate Modigliani. 'It's badly done,' he declared. 'Nothing can be said for it at all. It has no significant form, the line is uninteresting, the color is muddy and the texture poor—put them all together and it's lousy'."

The union's delegation went over Sterner's head to State Administrator Paul Edwards who agreed that the question of competence in painting could not be decided by one man. Edwards agreed to a jury of three prominent artists selected from panels submitted by union and art administrator. The selection to be agreed upon by both parties. Pending the jury's decision Pfeufer was to remain on the payroll.

The following day a release appeared stating that Pfeufer was definitely dismissed after two prominent artists (who remain anonymous) had seen his work and judged it incompetent. This statement was a direct violation of the agreement made with Edwards. The shifting of responsibility, and the open contradictions of authority characteristic of administrators not only in Massachusetts, was by now well under way. Sterner continued with his misrepresentations to the press. *The Boston Post* even quotes Mr. Edwards, who had assayed a role of impartiality and also of irresponsibility as to his subordinate's actions, as saying the W.P.A. objected to spending relief money for the type of painting done by Mr. Pfeufer.

It is significant that while Sterner insisted to the union delegation that incompetence was the charge, the daily press of Boston received continually from him releases slandering the Artists' Union of Massachusetts. It doesn't take an Aristotle to see that it was fortunate for Sterner that the leader of organized artists in Boston was also progressive in his work.

The union has been content however to fight the issue out on the question of competence. Luckily Pfeufer's work is of a character no longer controversial except in the most academic circles. The



union has gone through with its nominations to a jury, and has selected three prominent local painters and critics: Karl Knaths, Harley Perkins and Dorothy Adlow. At any moment we may expect the decision that Pfeufer can paint, a decision Mr. Sterner must have held to himself in accepting Pfeufer for the project and accepting paintings from him for five months. By now the case has moved down to Washington where Mr. Pfeufer has gone also, and that eminent assembly the National Labor Relations Board gives indications of passing upon the case.

It is ironical that because the man fired in this case is an accomplished painter, the issue of his competence has to be brought foremost. Artists who are wise to administration methods know that competence is only one count on which to fire a man. Organizational activity rattles little bureaucrats like Sterner quicker than anything else.

The editors of ART FRONT are reproducing in this issue a painting by Pfeufer. Thousands of artists the country over will see the print and admit the man can paint. The time is coming, however, when layoffs will be by the hundreds. There will be no point in summoning juries to pass on all the men and women victimized by political greed. The principle has to be driven home with increasing vigor, with delegations, with demonstrations, with protests by wire and mail, that W.P.A. has not been set up to cater to the elite of the profession. We insist it shall assume honestly the character of a permanent national organization for keeping productive, at a respectable wage, all men and women who are practicing artists, who have chosen painting or sculpture as their life work.

The point has been clearly made at the recent Eastern District Convention that if we are to have a vital art in America, sustenance must be given to that broad basic group of practicing artists out of which what we term genius eventually raises itself. The meager reward of a livelihood is not to be dangled before starving artists, encouraging in them competition ruinous to their honest efforts, encouraging cynicism in them—negligible pot-boilers to tickle the ignorance of men busy at political chicanery.

The new national affiliation of Artists' Unions, together with the active American Artists' Congress, are now mobilized to defend the victims of administrative chiseling.

## MODERN HISTORY OF ART

**T**HE offices of the Federal Art Project in New York City are at 6 East 39th St.—just close enough to Fifth Avenue

to make it extremely difficult for hungry artists to believe that no jobs, no food, no clothing, no shelter are forthcoming from the W.P.A. or any other administration. Limousines, driving up to the very door of No. 6, bring ladies to tea at Loft's dainty shop.

Yet, when a delegation of thirty-seven needy artists and models visited the local administrator, Mrs. Audrey MacMahon, they were flatly told, last Wednesday afternoon, May 13th, that no jobs exist on the project. Further, she was emphatic in stating that she would not even try to secure jobs for them. So the delegation decided to sit down and wait in the office overnite or over any length of



Head

James Pfeufer

Ex-Secy., Boston Artists Union

time at all, till the administration would decide that giving jobs is as much a function of government as is drawing of salaries to administer and supply jobs.

At seven o'clock, Mrs. MacMahon having "disclaimed all responsibility"—albeit her attempts to impersonate Pontius Pilate are becoming, after all these many months, somewhat inane—the agents for the building, Messrs. Cross and Brown, persuaded the delegation to leave, using the police for persuaders. Needless to mention, the police forgot to leave their nightsticks home, as well as their habitually brutish manners, which included using jiu-jitsu and a thorough knowledge of football-kicking on the delegation, men and girls alike. . . .

On Thursday, the delegation again presented itself at the Federal Art Project offices: minus two, who had to remain home, after having been seriously kicked and truncheoned by the police on Wednesday. One lad had been knocked un-

conscious—but the police couldn't be expected to take cognizance of such a small fact, in the face of their responsibility which consisted of trying to knock out the rest of the delegation.

On Thursday evening, Mrs. MacMahon having left early again, the police kicked the delegation into the elevators again, herded them into the hallway to await the wagon, and joked with the W.P.A. guards and the manager of Loft's, while a picket line on the sidewalk, carrying Old Glory, picket signs and the Union flag, marched around and around, within a confined area. Both the delegation and the picket line were arrested.

At seven o'clock Friday, a moment before the expected daily greetings from the police, the delegation decided to call it a day and to go down to the first organizational meeting of the Federal Art Project Local of the City Projects Council. The head-supervisors whom Mrs. MacMahon had left behind to see that the police should not be too, too offended by the delegation—were most disappointed when the daily rough-house wasn't forthcoming. No doubt they went to see some gory gangster film, knowing that frustration might be a harmful thing (vide: Freud—"Man, Woman, and W.P.A.").

A successful picket-line, on Saturday, was assisted by the City Projects Council. Although unfortunately, only fifty-odd people were present,—the police were anticipating three hundred. Reporters were present, with photographers. The Union, the C.P.C. and the new W.P.A. Art Project Local must be chided for so neglecting the demands of *their* police and of *their* public. . . .

Mrs. MacMahon became gracious on Monday. She offered seven jobs on condition that the delegation would not insist on trying to remain in her offices overnite. She further promised five jobs a week hereafter to the unemployed.

The charges against the delegation were withdrawn in court. Yet, there are still thirty odd people who need jobs. They are determined to secure jobs. And they'll be found camping in the offices of the project until they secure very definite assurances that jobs for all are immediately forthcoming. They know that their action is definitely linked to the continuation of the project. They are hungry, they need clothing and shelter: they are not afraid of police, of Mrs. A. MacMahon, nor of, least of all, the sentiments of such passersby who dare such platitudes as "Why don't they all go home?"



# FULL REPORT OF THE EASTERN DISTRICT CONVENTION OF THE ARTISTS' UNIONS

**T**WELVE hundred artists, delegates and friends met at the Hotel New Yorker in New York, May 7 in the first Artists' Union Convention of the Eastern District of the United States. This is the first time in our history that large numbers of artists have come together to find a common ground on economic issues. The emergence of the artists as a group into the economic field is a recent phenomenon. Once started, however, they have tackled their problems with a firmness and clearheadedness that is the envy of many older and more experienced groups. The Convention is a result of these activities and stands now as a landmark of achievement in this field. It also marks the beginning of another phase of activity—the local struggles have now been raised to a national struggle.

The inspiring work of the Convention has laid a solid foundation upon which the artists in all sections of the country may fight for security and cultural development. The work of the Convention will long be remembered by the delegates participating. With almost machine-like precision it took up in three days an appalling amount of work. Unfruitful issues were rejected and pertinent material was promptly and effectively acted upon. The delegates will carry back to their unions detailed reports of the Convention, but space forbids our taking up here anything but the major issues dealt with.

The open session was devoted to the presentation by outstanding speakers of many of the major problems facing the artists. The program of this session follows:

David Freed, Secretary of American Musicians' Union, Local 802, "Contributions to Culture by the Trade Unions."

Elmer Rice, noted playwright, "Need of Professionals to Organize."

George Biddle, President of National Mural Painters Society, "A Realistic Approach to Organization."

Stuart Davis, Secretary of the American Artists Congress, "The Defense of Culture."

Samuel Putnam, "Experiences of Artists Abroad."

Francis G. Gorman, Vice-President of United Textile Workers Union, American Federation of Labor, "Farmer-Labor Party and the Professional."

Meyer Schapiro, Department of Fine

Arts, Columbia University, "Art and Art Projects."

Willis Morgan, President of City Projects Council, "White-collar Professionals on Relief."

Phil Bard, executive member of the Artists' Union, "A National Artists' Union."

## *Business of the Closed Sessions*

The reports of the various delegates having been presented, the consideration of the problems before the Convention got speedily under way. Represented were the Artists' Unions of Boston, Mass., Providence, R. I., Provincetowns, Mass., Springfield, Mass., Baltimore, Philadelphia, Ulster County, West Maine and New York City. The major accomplishments of the three days' sessions may be summarized as follows:

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Artists' Unions support the expansion of projects:

1. They stand for the enlarging of existing projects.

2. They demand a uniform wage scale. Immediate campaign for N. Y. wage of 23.86 for 24 hour-week.

In view of the fact that project work is not used locally (Balto work used in

Cleveland, National exhibitions, etc.), they oppose population stipulations which are no actual criterion of actual cost of living and demand equal pay for equal work.

Ultimate struggle for the trade union minimum of \$2 per hour, 15 hours per week.

3. They oppose the paupers oath and such restrictive clauses:

In opposition to all relief restrictions, alien clauses, etc., they demand the employment of all artists in need of work.

4. They support the establishment of federal art project galleries.

These are to be established by the administration in order to show project work at its best advantage.

In localities where pressure on the federal administration is inadequate, the Artists' Unions should use every means possible to secure city, county, and state grants for educational work.

It is the recommendation of the Artists' Unions that legislative committees be established:

1. In every locality.

2. In every state (when there is more than one union in a state).

3. By the national organization.

There should be a bulletin issued periodically by this committee.



"Greenpoint, Brooklyn"

Moses Oley

Courtesy Municipal Art Gallery



It is the purpose of the committees to utilize vote pressure on officials which has been generally ignored by the unions up to now. They are to gather information, and conduct letter writing campaigns of union members and others on all bills effecting the economic, cultural, interests and civil liberties of members.

The Artists' Unions agree to initiate and cooperate in any campaign against reaction, war and fascism.

Local affiliation with the American League is recommended.

Protest of the removal of James Pfeufer, Executive Secretary of the Artists' Union of Mass., and demand removal of Frank W. Sterner, State Supervisor of Art Projects. Send protests to Holger Cahill, Federal Art Director, Washington, D. C.; to Paul Edwards, State Director of all Projects, W.P.A., Park Square Building, Boston, Mass., to Richard C. Morrison, Regional Director of Art Projects, 85 Devonshire Street, Boston, Mass.

The Artists' Unions should broaden their activities to include non-project activities:

1. Municipal art gallery and center.

Expansion to include other groups in cultural center.

2. Establishment of art schools by the Artists' Unions.

3. The holding of union exhibitions.

These should not be allowed to compete with project shows. \$1 to \$10 shows, open air shows, etc., should be avoided if they are apt to destroy the commodity value of paintings, etc. In general the cheap side-show circus is to be avoided and activities confined to those channels which will raise art interest. Trade union shows, etc., are to be encouraged.

4. Headquarters.

Attractive headquarters are very advantageous, especially in the larger cities to serve as club rooms, etc. Springfield has the advantage of being able to meet in the art museum there.

5. Bulletins.

These should not be too pretentious as they may consume too much time and energy. Baltimore publishes a local page in the "Art Front."

6. General cultural and social activities. These include forums.

The Artists' Unions should work with other artists' groups.

Artists' Coordination Committees should be established for the exchange of information on rental municipal centers, etc.

The Artists' Unions should cooperate with other relief and white-collar groups.

Set up a W.P.A. Council (not a loose tie-up but a close organization.)

The Artists' Unions should work with the A. F. of L.

Artists' Unions should cooperate locally with the A. F. of L. on all possible measures. Affiliation will have to pend the formation of National Organization. As the building trades are opposed to the artists, while the other unions such as the musicians and teachers and bookkeepers, etc., favor us, it is probable our best opportunity is through the Committee for Industrial Organization (Lewis). We will only enter on the basis that we maintain our own jurisdiction.

The Artists' Union should undertake to realize the maximum of publicity from their activities.

Letters of greeting to the Eastern Convention were received from many figures in the Art World. Warm letters of support were received from the following individuals: Peter Blume, Lynd Ward, Harry Sternberg, Lucian Bernhard, Max Weber, Walker Ufer, E. M. Benson, Yasuo Kuniyoshi.

The Teachers' Union and the Artists' Congress sent telegrams supporting the aims of the convention.

## RENTAL POLICY

A National Rental Policy Committee was set up to cope with the Rental Policy on a National Basis. Questions of conditions under which the rental fee will be requested and minimum fees to be asked will be undertaken by this committee. The committee will consist of delegates from each of the following groups.

Mural Painters Society.

American Group.

Harlem Artists Guild.

American Artists Congress.

National Sculpture's Society with one delegate from each Artist Union.

\* \* \*

## CONSTITUTION OF EASTERN DISTRICT UNION

### PREAMBLE

Believing that united action can best improve the conditions of the artist professionally engaged in the practice of the plastic and graphic arts, that the production of painting, sculpture and all other forms of the plastic arts are dependent upon the economic well being of artists, and that the social and economic problems of the artists are not different from those of all labor;

Therefore, we the undersigned, have organized the Artists Union of the Eastern District of the U.S.A. and do voluntarily bind ourselves to support and carry out its purposes as set forth in the following program.

### Article 1. Name.

The name shall be Artists Union, Eastern District, U.S.A.

### Article 2. Aims and Purposes

Sec. 1. To unite in a single body all men and women who are professionally engaged in the practice of the graphic and plastic arts.

Sec. 2. To improve and protect the economic conditions of the artists.

Sec. 3. To maintain and further cultural standards of this country by encouraging a wider distribution and understanding of art in the general public.

Sec. 4. To aid in securing such legislation as may contribute to the protection and advancement of the social and economic status of the artist.

Sec. 5. To protect our craft and the persons engaged therein from discriminatory and repressive legislation and actions, and to insure complete liberty of expression.

Sec. 6. To support and cooperate with any organized group engaged in actions of a progressive nature socially, economically and culturally.

### Article 3. Executive Board

#### A. Powers:

Sec. 1. The Eastern District Executive Board shall have the authority to act in the name of all affiliated bodies, in all questions of national significance within the scope of the program above.

Sec. 2. The Executive Board may make recommendations to the local union on questions of local character.

Sec. 3. Executive power shall be determined by the majority vote of (a quorum of) the Executive Board.

Sec. 4. It shall have regular quarterly meetings. All actions outside of these meetings shall be by majority vote by written communications.

Sec. 5. In an emergency, the Central Committee shall have the power to act in the capacity of the Executive Board, this action to be subject to confirmation by majority vote of the Executive Board.

Sec. 6. The Central Executive Committee shall have the power to call emergency meetings of the Executive Board.

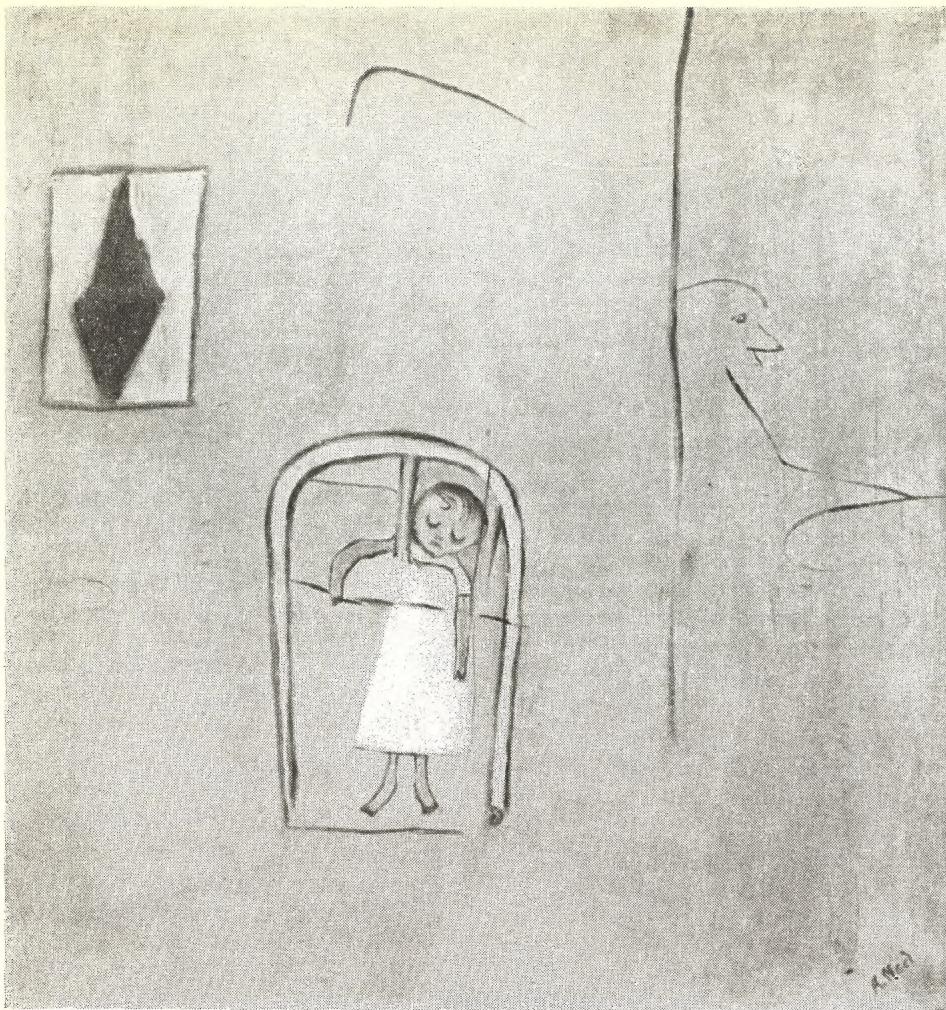
Sec. 7. The Central Executive Committee shall prepare and inform the members of the Executive Board of the issues that will be taken up at the regular and special meetings of that board.

Sec. 8. A majority of the Executive Board shall constitute a quorum.

#### B. Structure:

Sec. 1. The Executive Board shall consist of members elected on a numerical basis. There shall be one delegate from each Artists' Union having a membership





Poverty

Alice Neel

Courtesy Municipal Art Gallery

of fewer than 100; 100 to 300, 2 delegates; 300 to 500, 3 delegates, 500 to 700, 4 delegates; above 700, 5 delegates.

Sec. 2. There shall be a Central Executive Committee of five, elected from the convention. It shall consist of a chairman, secretary, and treasurer and two others.

#### Article 4. Local Powers

Sec. 1. The local Artists Union shall have the right to elect its representative or representatives to the Executive Board of the Artists Union, Eastern District, U.S.A.

Sec. 2. The local union shall have the power to initiate action only within the scope of the program and aims of the Artists Union, Eastern District.

Sec. 3. The local union shall have power to make recommendations to the District Executive Board.

Sec. 4. Action which has been approved by majority vote of the Eastern District Executive Board shall be binding on all affiliated Artists Unions.

Sec. 5. Any group of 7 artists or over in the Eastern District, U.S.A., is eligible for application for membership in the

Artists Union, Eastern District, providing they accept the program of the Artists Union as outlined above.

#### Article 5. Finances

Sec. 1. The dues from affiliated Artists Unions shall be \$5 quarterly per delegate in the Executive Board.

#### Article 6. Art Front

Sec. 1. The *Art Front* shall be the official publication of the Artists Union, Eastern District, U.S.A.

Sec. 2. The local Artists Unions shall set up committees which shall have editorial and business responsibility.

### RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EASTERN DISTRICT CONVENTION

#### I.

Be it resolved that we go on record as urging the establishment of a Permanent Federal Art Project to include all artists, and that we further favor the immediate introduction and passage by Congress of the Federal Art Bill as the only means of establishing the minimum demands of art-

ists in the cultural and economic fields. We further urge all trade unions, economic, cultural organizations and individuals directly to contact their congressmen and representatives by means of letters, telegrams and petitions demanding the passage of the Federal Art Bill.

#### II.

Be it resolved that this convention go on record as supporting the Frazier-Lundeen Bill for adequate social and unemployment insurance.

#### III.

Be it resolved that this convention go on record as supporting the Marcantonio Relief Standards as one providing for the protection of our union and economic rights.

#### IV.

As neither of the major existing political parties offers satisfaction of the minimum demands for permanent economic security in the form of adequate unemployment insurance, expansion of the W.P.A. to include all unemployed on a permanent basis and old age pensions and as we seek peace to protect and advance the cultural life of the people in preference to increased armaments destructive to these pursuits, we therefore urge the formation of a Farmer-Labor Party dedicated to these principles and recommend that each affiliated Artists' Union initiate and support all efforts toward building this political party for professionals, farmers and workers.

#### V.

Be it resolved that this convention of the Eastern District of the Artists Union pledges itself to fight all tendencies and forces of reaction, war and fascism.

(a) We endorse the boycott of all publications of William Randolph Hearst because of his manifestations of anti-union, anti-civil liberties and un-American policies.

(b) We endorse the boycott of the Olympic Art Exhibition to be held in the summer of 1936 in Berlin and urge all artists to support this stand.

(c) We recommend to all affiliated artist bodies that they co-operate with local chapters of the American League Against War and Fascism.

(d) We call upon all artists to refuse to make any posters that would foster war propaganda.

#### VI.

Be it resolved that this convention of the Eastern District of the Artists Union go on record as endorsing and supporting the Federal Youth Act.



# WAR AND FASCISM

By Lynd Ward

*WAR AND FASCISM*: An International Exhibition of Cartoons, Drawings and Prints under the auspices of the American Artists' Congress: New School for Social Research, New York City: April 15 through May 6.

LYND WARD

THE significance of this exhibition goes beyond the world of art, goes beyond the confines of any one country and the immediate present, and makes it a landmark on the broad highway. From time immemorial artists have been pushed around by the dominant economic forces in the social structure, have been used and abused, have been sometimes lauded when dead and more frequently despised when living; the miracle is that artists as a functional group have survived and somehow built up a tradition of the importance of art.

This habitual treatment has reached its high water mark in the years of the present crisis. It has been complicated and made more ominous by those conditions in the modern world which have been moving with terrifying speed towards war and fascism. For the artist these twin madnesses are the ultimate expression of the inimical forces in society; for the artist they represent disaster and destruction more poignantly, perhaps, than for any other group. And what has been so tragic in this situation is the fact that the philosophy, the way of life, the rationalization of his relation to the world that the artist has been compelled to create about himself, all tended to prevent him from doing anything about it.

However this reluctance on the part of artists to deal with their problems realistically came to an end with the creation of economic organizations like the New York Artists' Union to fight against starvation and functional atrophy. Later the Artists' Congress was formed as the expression in this country of art as a living, active force in society. This exhibition represents still another step ahead. Because of the way the exhibition was conceived and organized, because of the way it brings together what have been sporadic or isolated expressions, because of the profound motivation which caused it to happen at this particular moment, it is

in essence the artist standing on his own feet for the first time in history and saying: "The time has come for artists to do something about the kind of world we want."

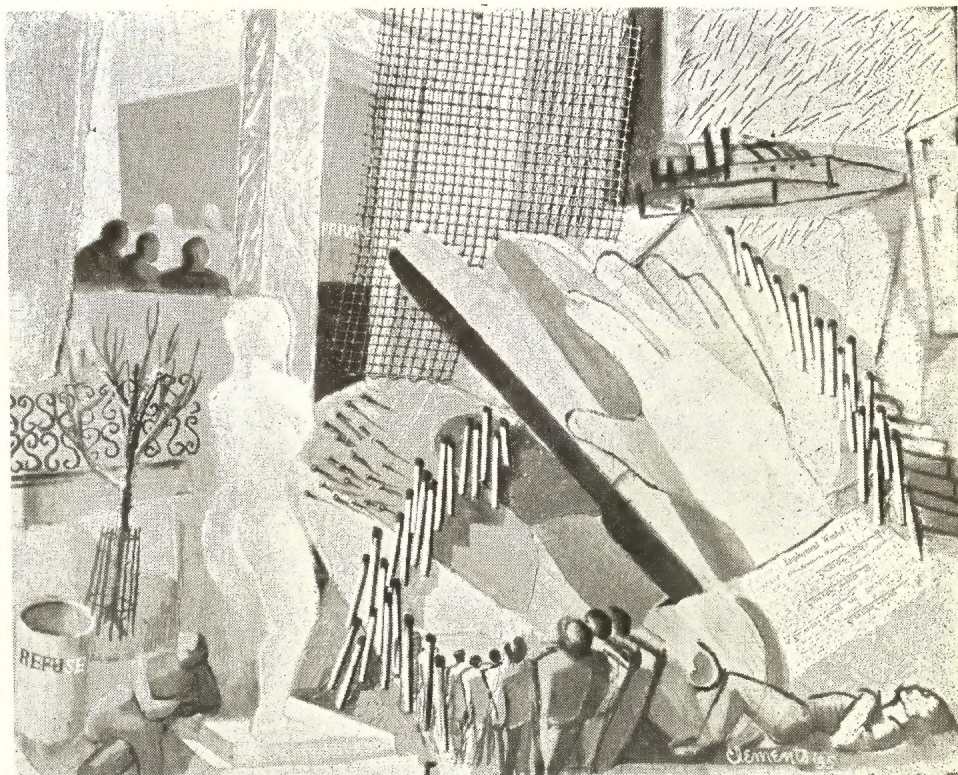
This exhibition is action. With the New School reporting that it has brought more people to the galleries than any other show they have had this season, with seven cities already listed as stopping points on a traveling schedule over the whole country, with its permanent existence in film-strip form ensuring continued and widespread contact with almost limitless audiences, the potential results in terms of reaching people and moving them are incalculable.

And it has equal or even greater import for the artists of this country. It makes us sharply aware that revulsion against war is one of the strongest currents in the broad stream of art. And from the telescoping of time that is here brought about emerges the realization that a gradual change has occurred in the expression of this revulsion, a definite change and one of deep significance.

The artist has always known that war is brutal and hideous. When Durer undertook a series of engravings of the dominant aspects of the life of his time, he significantly gave two companions to the full-armoured warrior, and these two companions were Death and the Devil. And a hundred years later, Jacques Callot, in that unforgettable series, "The Miseries and Misfortunes of War", catalogued all the horrors that man, ridden by the war-fever, visits upon his fellow man—slow death and torture, butchering of prisoners, rape, pillage, burning, hanging of the civilian population—the whole list. Goya communicated those horrors in terms of the experience of his generation; Otto Dix has done it with unbelievable power for the Europe of our time; Kerr Eby has catalogued most of the brutal mess using the symbols and figures closest to our own people, Americans in the last war. Thus you have an accumulation of the bitterest kind of reality and it is difficult to believe that any one can remain entirely unaffected by it.

But, some may say, we have always had wars, we have always had artists attacking war with the careful documentation of Callot, with the virulent force of Dix, and we still have wars. So to what avail? Is the expression of the reality of war of any objective significance?

The answer is that it is precisely because the artist today can and does go beyond the immediate emotion to other realities that the age-old revulsion against



Dialectic

Grace Clements  
Courtesy Brooklyn Museum



war becomes more significant and objectively significant.

The modern artist can see beyond the man killing and the man killed. He can identify those forces in society that make for death, forces that in Durer's time could be but vaguely symbolized as the "Devil." The artist knows that whatever it was three hundred years ago, today war is an activity of the political and economic system we live under. He can understand that system and the causes of war that are imbedded in its basic composition in a way that was impossible for earlier generations, because of the knowledge and experience the human race has gained in the past twenty years. Those basic causes and the groups in society that are the protagonists of war and Fascism, its twin, are realities of our world and are expressed in the work of Art Young, of Adolf Dehn, of Franz Masereel, of Mabel Dwight, for example.

## FOURTH ANNIVERSARY DOROTHY PARIS GALLERY

By Basil Rauch

*(This is the first of a series of articles dealing with well-known painters' groups.)*

**D**URING the War Maurice Becker served a hitch in Leavenworth rather than go to fight. Before that he had done black and whites for the old Masses. John Lonergan of the United States Marine Corps was charged with mutiny in Mexico for refusing to fire on unarmed peons. A. F. Levinson was a Socialist and after the war he split the Board of Directors of the Art Students' League on the issue of Gifford Beal's reactionary policies.

By 1932 these men had found themselves as painters and they with others organized as the Eighth Street Gallery Group. They had no other purpose than to sell their pictures, through Dorothy Paris the owner of the gallery. Each had emerged with a talent hard developed, and they were ready for recognition and material rewards. They achieved recognition. Critics agreed they had more than promise. They had, in a way, arrived.

So they picked up odd jobs, borrowed from friends, taught a few classes, sold picture frames. Some signed the pauper's oath and went on home relief. Meanwhile they carried paintings to wealthy ladies on Park Avenue, showed them, and carried them back again. The ladies seemed interested mostly in the personalities of

It is this second reality added to the first that makes the artist's revulsion against war of such importance: it communicates understanding as well as result.

But there is something that goes beyond even this point. We can see around us the groups in society that can, because of the nature of modern warfare and the demands it makes in the entire social structure, stop war and make a new world. Awareness of these groups and their potentials is beginning to emerge in the work of the modern artist, and the expression of that third reality is the final necessity in the visual attack. The character and significance of these forces must have that expression in order that unity and self-realization in the many-faceted upsurge can be achieved. The power of that upsurge can no longer be derided by the cynical nor denied by the blind. This exhibition is one of its profound manifestations.

the artists. They showed regularly as a group and in one-man shows. Invitations came for individuals to join older groups, but they all stuck. Critics assured them that they were being watched, that they were the most interesting group of young painters in New York. A few won prizes, and bought new colors. From month to month the gallery's existence was threatened.

Then the Rockefeller Center Mile of Art was ready to open and it seemed to the group a good chance to show, to sell. John Lonergan and Aaron Goodleman held out. They proposed that Rockefeller's treatment of the Rivera mural obliged them not to show but to boycott the exhibition. They saw a connection between such action and their continued existence not only as a group but as individual practising artists. It wasn't clear to the others.

Lonergan and Goodleman picketed with the Artists Committee of Action. The Group's pictures were singled out for special praise, but none were sold.

When the Artists' Union was organized Lonergan, Becker and Goodleman joined. They approached the others in the Group. It still seemed more dignified to accept seven dollars a week relief from the government than to demand that society make use of their talent. Each year, it seemed, would be the last for the gallery.

The gallery didn't close. The Artists' Union by its militancy had obtained jobs for a great many artists. All the members of the Group were invited to take jobs on the W.P.A. easel project. Artists everywhere were coming out of their retirement. Reactionary powers were being forced into a more progressive attitude toward living art, murals were being painted, children and students were being organized into classes. Most of all a wide and deep demand for art on the part of the masses was being revealed. The members of the Group joined the Union with the exception of one man. He is painting on the easel project as a result of the militancy of the Union, but he doesn't believe in militancy.

At their first Union meeting or two the new members didn't understand why they should be concerned with the problems of the May's Department Store strikers, or the victims of Wall Street's reaction in Cuba. As they took jobs on one or another project, teaching or painting they began to understand and to take part themselves in the struggle for permanent projects and for unity of workers everywhere.

This year the Group was able to take a step toward socializing the ownership of the gallery and has reorganized as the Dorothy Paris Gallery at 56 West 53rd Street. This step, too, seemed not a mixing in extraneous affairs but an important part of their growing function in society as artists.

If you drop in at the current Fourth Anniversary show you will observe in the fine group of pictures no reflection of the struggle for social integration which these men have experienced. It is fortunately so, perhaps, for the ladies from Westchester who dash at a gallery between Bergdoff-Goodman's and the Theatre Guild. John Lonergan's bright sunlight on sad, impotent landscapes, De Martini's serene woman in black and gray, Dirk's calligraphic water colors, the pastoral factory scene of Morris Davidson, Burliuk's bile green and livid pink Sea Shells and contented Italian Fishermen, the dry vibrant studies of Weston, Liberte's rich tenebrous palette, Datz's Woman with Pigeons, neither these nor the work of Fega Blumberg, Hans Foy, Levinson, Rosabel Paris, or Anthony Palazzo will indicate that the artists have ever found a connection between the problems of light, color and composition and their problems as members of a decaying social order. But the lessons of the war years were forgotten by students who hoped to get in on the boom, and now it is only, after all, their fourth anniversary as a Group.



# ARTISTS AS ILLUSTRATORS

By Clarence Weinstock

WITH the present show at the Museum of Modern Art the painter and sculptor find themselves once more faced not merely with the idea but with the fact of the artist as illustrator. See, already a note of contradiction has appeared; "as" seems to imply that a degree of alienation from himself must take place before the artist can attend to the problems of illustration. He must give up certain of the high objectives of his art and submit to a foreign discipline in order to be successful as an interpreter. The prejudice against illustration in modern times has gone through every stage from revolt against psychological or dramatic devices to pure abstraction, the refusal to admit, as a source of irrelevant interest, any recognizable or other than plastically vital content. If the mind could be distracted by Delacroix's "Massacre of Scio" to forget that there was an organization of forms and colors presented for it to consider, why would it not be equally bemused by three apples, two oranges, a knife and a tablecloth? And might not the painter himself be caught up with thoughts of a summer afternoon, long enough for the planes to collapse and the colors to soften into so many tints, hues and shades of their proper selves? The great aesthetic victories of Picasso, Braque and many others following Cezanne gave this conclusion the appearance of a natural truth. (It may be added that with respect to book illustration a few other material objections existed: the old custom of employing an engraver to work up the artist's sketch could only produce what might at best be called a compromise. Color printing had not reached the degree of accuracy it now has. The hand press might not make the required impression. And so on.)

Roger Fry in "Transformations" attempts to deal with the problem by separating the expression of plastic from that of psychological values. He wants to regard them as distinct though sometimes complementary arts. Illustration is perhaps really a form of literature whose identity is mistaken because of its medium. A certain tension will always exist, either in the artist or in the spectator, between the painting conceived as such and the painting as it represents a mov-

ing or charming spectacle. The introduction of human beings, as bearers of spiritual values, will of course increase this tension; sometimes in very great paintings the requirements of art and those of meaning operate against one another so that it is either less art and more meaning or more art and less meaning. Works of Breugel, Daumier and Poussin are analyzed to show how the structure of the two former suffered because of dramatic and psychological preoccupation whereas the latter's indifference to psychology (this is presumed, allowing for some changes in seventeenth century and modern manners of emotional expression) enables him to accomplish wonders of formal organization.

However, says Fry, there are times when the literary and the plastic imagination are both so highly developed in a single man, for example Rembrandt or Rouault, that neither the spiritual nor the aesthetic elements of their work suffer from their relation to one another. The tension is relaxed and you have high literature plus high art.

This of course solves nothing: Fry has merely admitted the contradiction with the assurance that it could be pretty well covered up in certain cases. But this would depend on the painter's possessing within him two distinct qualities of the imagination which would run parallel to one another throughout the creation of the work of art, never meeting, but which when added together might show a result that would satisfy the spectator. And the spectator would be satisfied not because he had converted these separate values, the literary and plastic, into one dynamic experience, but because one group of values and *then* the other spoke to his eyes and *then* to his mind. That you have one painting is only a material accident which analysis will remedy.

The reason why Fry's separation of the artist as such from the artist as illustrator, seems so plausible is that there is some historical evidence for it. The artist's frequent lack of interest in his subjects, his disbelief, and perhaps also his lack of general culture are indicated in hundreds of canvases which possess fine plastic qualities, while being psychologically indifferent or insincere. On the other hand, in the revolutionary breaking down, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, of the old religious and social hierarchies of values (which had themselves produced firm, guiding styles in the arts) many artists were prepared to make certain sacrifices of form to meaning. They participated in the intellectual struggles of the people, *i.e.*, of



American Scene

Clara Skinner



the proletariat and insurgent sections of petty bourgeoisie, and their work reflects the cultural needs of the classes in whose problems they participated. The proletariat was giving birth to its first great men and also drawing them from other strata of society. Its problems were not aesthetic but political, social, philosophical. And so its art is not too completely developed in its formal qualities, though its political culture and its dramatic understanding are on a very high level.

But does this mean that the literary and the plastic imagination run opposed or at best parallel to one another in the conception of a work of art? It seems to me that this question is one for the artist to solve, not the critic. And the answer depends on historical conditions which create in the artist an increased awareness of the possibilities of his craft, deepen his culture and so produce a qualitative change in his imagination. By qualitative change I mean one in which the literary and the plastic imagination are united, inseparable both in the artist and the spectator. This union has been achieved before in the history of art, and its accomplishment is inevitable now when the artist associates himself more with the general culture and finally the social movements of his time.

The museum show is filled with splendid book illustrations by the foremost modern artists. Excepting a few, they have all approached their work without affectation in style or irresponsibility to the text. They have given it the same attention they devote to their easel pictures, to the "purer art" of the self-contained canvas. But these books are not only a record of literary culture. They show that the artist, while revealing that culture in his own medium, has also, *in one and the same act of the imagination*, resolved the formal problems which at other times are his only concern.

He may do this in various ways depending on the particular problem set him by the nature of the text, the type face, the format and on his customary style and intellectual development. It is significant that many of the illustrations which are not only admirable for their formal qualities but also distinguished for sympathy with their texts come from France, whose literature has been the most sensitive instrument for recording the revolts and conflicts of the modern intellect. In general the French artists have dispensed with the ordinary attempts at obvious psychological depiction, violent expressions, grimaces and the like. They have rather imparted to their line, their color, their planes, qualities of organization that are expressive of moods, emotions and even ideas. The line, the form become



Illustration from "Hold Up Yo' Head"

Herb Kruckman

the absolute equivalents of the happenings they describe. It is as though, independent of their representational content they would still convey what they now do. In the past Giotto's and Goya's organization was of this type.

Many of the artists have chosen classical, pastoral and folklore texts. Picasso has done Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*; Rodin, Ovid's *Elegies*; Maillol, Virgil's *Eclogues* and Georgics, Ronsard's *Book of Follies*, Ovid's *Art of Love*, Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*; Bonnard, *Longus*; Calder, L'Estrange's *Aesop*; there are a few *Zodiac*, *Bestiaries*, fables and fairy tales. It would be interesting to know why these texts, devoid of modern conflict, came into such fashion with the artists. In any case they found in them the same self-contained beauty they demanded in their own work, a beauty which time had made to seem more in-and-for-itself.

More complex is Degas' problem with De Maupassant's *La Maison Tellier*, Leger's with Cendrars' *La Fin du Monde*, Chagall's with Gogol's *Dead Souls*, Rouault's with Vollard's *Reincarnation du Pere Ubu*, Suares' *Passion* for his own *Miserere* and *Guerre*, Annenkov's with Blok's poem of the Russian Revolution, *The Twelve*, or Gellert's with Marx's *Capital*. Here the break with tradition was almost complete. The texts demanded much more than the reproduction of an atmosphere, a "catching of the spirit." They needed what every modern artist needs for his audience to take him

seriously, precise psychology, social and political understanding, audacity in dealing with convention, historical culture. If the illustrators of these texts have failed in part it is only because of the unfamiliar demands made upon them.

And now, it is possible that there is a growing audience to whom illustration may be not the lowest but perhaps the very highest form of the visual arts. I think of the proletariat which is always in motion and conflict, which tolerates no ideas that cannot be proven in practice, which will not stop until everything hidden is made visible, and which recognizes no more spiritual value than human action-upon-thought. With this class alone all the artificial boundaries between the interrelated faculties of human beings, their sensations, perceptions and thoughts, are broken down. Likewise this class struggle to unite those categories which, while defining the individual's relation to nature and society, opposed themselves to one another. The chemical man was one thing, the thinking man another, the economic and the aesthetic man still others. The proletariat does not recognize such distinctions beyond the need for them in analysis. Likewise the distinction between art as the expression of form and as the expression of drama exists only in the critic's vocabulary but not in the creative action of the artist.

Note: The catalogue, "Modern Artists and Sculptors as Illustrators," by Monroe Wheeler is recommended for its excellent examples of illustration.



# THE POST SURREALISTS OF CALIFORNIA

By Joe Solman

THE Brooklyn Museum is showing through the Summer an important group of painters from the West Coast who call themselves Post-Surrealists. Readers of Art Front may recall a concise article "New Content—New Form" (March issue) by Grace Clements, a member of the group, in which she summed up their purpose with the following: "A new aesthetic, stemming from Surrealism, cubism and Cezanne's classicism is finding expression in Hollywood, California. The exponents of this 'subjective-classicism' are working for the creation of an art which achieves classical unity through multiple perception—visual, psychological and philosophical . . . They have recognized the falsity of their ivory tower retreats. They have joined forces with their fellow-workers 'toward a new world.'" Lorser Feitelson, the originator of the movement, adds in a foreword to the current catalogue: "First, it is a cerebral, not an emotional art . . . The size of any object depicted is not determined, as in the prevalent mode of composition, by the space in the picture it has to fill or by naturalistic proportions, but by the object's psychological importance in the whole picture. . . ."

As can be seen their art leans heavily on the side of the ideological. Few groups have painters and spokesmen alike. And their attempt to shed critical light on the conditions of American society today by means of combined modern plastic methods is a highly admirable one. Unfortunately, or fortunately (as the case may be) not all the members stick to the original manifesto. There is very little of Cezanne's classicism and a few minor traces of cubism, almost the entire pre-occupation being with surrealist picture-making plus montage additions. As for social content, Clements and Merrild give it concrete expression. Feitelson and Labaudt too often drown it amid confused symbols and Lundeberg creates her own world of planet, stars and moon. Klokke is represented by a solitary example, an unimportant one which seems to have no kinship with the rest of the group.

In fact Clements is the only one who gives a precise pictorial meaning to her social criticism. In her painting, "1936.

Figure and landscape," a pattern of marching soldiers forms a skeleton under a monument to liberty which is bound around with the same rope that is committing a lynching. Her forms are intelligently grouped, her imagination lively and she is temperate in her use of the Dali narcotic. Her picture, "Reconsideration of Time and Space" is her finest composition. In the others she skilfully adopts elements of cubism and surrealism to express her indignation at the Capitalist program of unemployment, starvation and war.

Knud Merrild deals with hunger and birth in "Alpha and Omega," a montage of photos plus paint containing "shots" associated with the idea such as a woman, child, meatbone etc. Well composed, it shows the possibilities of cinematic devices in painting which Kurt Schwitters and Man Ray first exploited some years ago. In "Masks" and "Good an Evil" a more mystical quality prevails, but some original painting gives further proof of an unusual artist.

Lundeberg, who forsakes this planet for others is a high priestess of astrology. She dreams about planets, attracts them to her room and drinks in their topaz light. A tiny planet glows on a round table and shadows cut clear diagonals across the picture's rectangle. She has a remarkable command of her paint, composes adroitly her smaller canvases and her works impart a new, personal flavor to the Chirico-Roy tradition. She seems to be the most matured artist here and it is only a certain caution in her technique and an over-romanticized subject matter that thins out her art at times. "Cosmic Anthology," "Red Planet" and "The Isle" are among her finest things.

In the work of Lorser Feitelson we find a strange combination. He derives from Tintoretto massive, catapulting forms and sets them off with a telescopic space recession a la Dali. This unusual alliance results in what might be expected, a florid eclecticism, and we find Feitelson floundering among outworn pictorial trappings and the usual grandiose symbols of Genesis, Conjugation and Death. Except for "Procession," a more modest and excellently handled picture, his

work is full of religious-philosophical connotations which are a complete negation of the great class-struggle today.

Lucien Labaudt uses several styles, none of which have reached any special distinction. Pictures like "Telepathic travels to Tahiti" are a sort of cubist travel-poster, obvious in design and lacking in functional color. "Shampoo at Moss Beach" satirizes the extravagant indulgence of the society matron. A profusion of symbolic details in the Baroque manner makes the painting as decadent in form as it is in content. "The Accordion Player" is the painter's best conception and by far the most sensitive in execution. We hope he will go further in this direction.

Labaudt and Feitelson stress too insistently the literary note in painting. Such a connotation is one of the most dangerous roads the art of painting can take. If the idea is not filtered through plastic sensations the result is a hybrid as in the case of Dali or insufficient as in Blake's art. It is not the use of associative ideas that spoils so many of the surrealist paintings as the lack of a firm plastic base to support these ideas. How far the psychological element can intrude on painting will always remain an unanswered question, but we know that Klee and Ernst have had to utilize a veritable storehouse of new plastic symbols to pin their psychic states to paper or canvas.

Surrealism versus cubism and abstract art is simply the old battle of romantic and classic art again. Cubism gave the painter a more dynamic technique than heretofore. It was mainly a studio-laboratory propulsion. Surrealism was a reaffirmation of the mystical life, a contemplation of the old world's decay. And while the latter group went the way of all fatalists, bowing to death, cubism emerged from its precious framework to become further a socially utilitarian force, *i.e.*, a Cassandre poster, an Orozco mural, functional architecture, etc. Now we find a Post-Surrealist group, some of whose members like Lundeberg and Feitelson are conserving their mystic purity while the others are trying to make their symbols speak in terms of an acute social criticism. This manifestation on the part of painters to weld together critical thinking with a modern plastic approach is sufficiently superior to the commonplace proletarian "snapshot" to merit some real attention. But they might be reminded that just as Post-Impressionism rebelled against the romantic confetti of its father movement by means of flat surface areas and vigorous contours so Post-Surrealism must reject the hallowed spaces of surrealism and replace its dead symbols with living ones.



# THE UNION SHOW

By B. G.

**M**AY the sixth opened in the hall of the Union a regular non-jury exhibition. The hanging is excellent and not over-crowded; the committee specified small pictures. An interesting feature is a panel of photographs of members of the Models' Union, nudes and portraits. The names of the photographers should have been specified.

The union show is of special importance. Organized artists are exhibiting. It should become a sort of curiosity by now, leading to speculation and perhaps even statistics—just what is characteristic in the painting of men and women who during an economic crisis take the normal and aggressive way out? Why is it, for instance, that work with a social and political point of view is decidedly in the minority?

The editors of *ART FRONT*, to be perfectly candid, have had difficulty finding someone to review the show. They went in search of an honest man, an artist instead of a critic perhaps, and all hands turned them down.

It ought to be plain by now that reviews of group shows almost always are garbled unless they stick to generalities. Take forty artists showing one picture each. How are you going to handle them? Are

you going to run around the walls taking up each painter who seems to know how to use a brush, and pin an adjective on him? Are you going to say, "Harriton competent as usual, decorative ability prominent this time", Solman reaches a higher key and more active rhythms", "Sid Gotcliffe attains his most effective unity of color and design in a prison interior", "H. Brisman convinces us with his realistic sculptured 'Forgotten Man'", "Geri Pine offers an original, strong, earthy farm canvas", "Melichov does the nicest horse in stone we have seen in years", "Louis Nisonoff's 'Pool Room' contains a provocative balance and movement", and "Schnitzler proves more sturdy in his use of color"? Is this the adroitness which constitutes a good review?

All such trite statements are misleading. The impression may be that Harriton has given up proletarian painting, or that Solman has given up his dark effects but also his seriousness. Then, to win your spurs as a fearless critic, are you not obliged to censure a number who please you less? "Weller appears clever but a sensationalist in his 'Lynching'." "The attempts at a revolutionary art are generally drab."

Surely we all know by now that *you* can't estimate a man from one picture, and *you've* no right to generalize from the one even if you know the man's earlier work. When you review a group show you're in a tough spot from the start. Ten to one you'll slide into the role of a newsman, making all such dull observations about subject matter, style of painting, and choice of frames as anyone could make.

Since everyone suspects the group review is worth little as criticism, it is accepted, by artists, for its publicity value. To be mentioned is good. Given one adjective you ought to be happy. Given five, you ought to renew your faith in professional criticism. There's not much difference, from the publicity angle, whether the critic calls you "careful, competent and reserved", or "careless, a novice and noisy." The adjective's the thing. Pin them in your scrap book and if in three years you get fifty inches, then you're made. The museums will start inviting you places. The critics will see you in the museums and respect you. The worst offence you can be dealt is for the critic to ignore you.

The prevailing opinion on *ART FRONT* now is that a group show is dull, perhaps ought not be held, much less reviewed, unless it has been organized for a purpose. Unless the artists have something in common which gives a starting point for comparison or for estimating efforts. Take the anti-war and anti-fascism show at the New School. Because the show was organized it was stimulating, not bewildering, and it allowed a sensible review. Take a group of surrealists who claim collectively to have established themselves as different from their predecessors. Take up their claim, look at the work, try to make the two jibe, render your decision. Now we're getting places, we're above personalities, we're dealing with the forces, not the accidents nor the impulses in human effort.

The disadvantage of a show assembled for a purpose is that it makes the critic's task easy. He can draw on all he knows and be vindicated, and he can close his eyes to much which he sees and be excused. He can "go" historical, tying up John Doe with El Greco and John Smith with Messiaen, or, if it pleases his thesis, make the tie-up the other way around. The artist *can* be distorted, it seems to the present writer, as easily this way as by the adjective method.

Let Meyer Shapiro review a show of modern work. He's a learned man and teaches at Columbia. He believes that most modern art from Cezanne on became introverted, cramped, fussy, and essentially decadent. He gives examples.



Surgeon

Irving Diener

Courtesy W.P.A.  
Federal Art Project



Somewhere in the course of his verbal adroitness is the assumption, which ought to be a premise open to inspection, that his examples of "modern" are a fair representation of the achievement of forty years of painting. At some point he ought to distinguish between the experiments and what we call the fruit of revolutionary effort.

There is no excuse, in the absence of Mr. Shapiro, for disputing him any further. The point is that the analytical review with a point of view, *if the premise is wrong*, becomes more misleading the further it is carried, the more comprehensive it seeks to be, and the more enforced it is by historical data.

Let the academic theorist talk in the clouds about you artists! Or let the critic get down in the dust like a newshawk and smell around your feet! Take your choice, if you think there is any!

For the hundredth time it is becoming clear that most professional criticism is messy business. The artist who relies on it, or is sensitive to it, is lost. The best we can hope is that in places like the Artists' Union artists will work and discuss their work. They will constitute, in a sense, a forum for criticism which is as plastic as their own efforts. The professional, outside critics will try to woo them by neat theories, or take pot-shots at them with whatever adjective they can lay hands on. But the artist who does not paint or model strenuously is negligible when offended and worthless as a convert.

Every exhibition in our union hall is a listing, in a sense, of men and women who *belong* in an artists' union. It is unfortunate that a member does not show because he has no work accomplished. It should be a pity if from modesty, or from a fancied superiority, a painter or a sculptor refrained from showing.

## THE INDEPENDENT'S TWENTIETH ANNUAL

by J. K.

**A**FTER twenty years, most institutions acquire enough tradition to have a past and too much tradition to have a future. The tradition created by the Society of Independent Artists, however, is one which emphasizes the democratic unity of artists of every esthetic creed, and the right of every artist to show his work without the dubious qualifications of a jury. Such a tradition does not age very easily. Nevertheless, its vitality can be blunted by new developments in art and

society. This is what has happened to the Independents.

The first exhibition of the Society took place while America was rushing into the World War. Young artists of modern or progressive tendencies had practically no opportunities to exhibit; the public had no large, comprehensive art show it could look upon as representative of American art; talented (or otherwise) amateurs had no chance to see their work hung side by side with leading painters. The Independents did much to rescue artists from their schismatic aloofness from one another and the people. As such, the Independents extended the right of artistic asylum to the pariahs who were too advanced and to those who were not advanced enough.

After that, the Independent show gave the left-wingers a chance to get home some political messages. It became yearly ritual for the John Reed Club to exhibit large, collective easel-murals on the important events of the day. Since the Independent Show provided practically the only opportunity for revolutionary artists to exhibit, it fulfilled an important function during those years.

Today, artists have broadened their fighting front and new institutions have arisen. The Artists' Union, The American Artists' Congress, socialization of artists through project jobs, the Municipal Art Center, the Salons of America, the maturing of revolutionary artists and other factors have narrowed the basis for the Independents. Their most important work is finished.

Since this is an anniversary year, many of the old timers have returned to exhibit. Stuart Davis carries off the honors with "Red Cart," a richly patterned canvas in his usual manner. Leon Kroll's "Head," and "A Farm in Maine" partake of that ingredient used extensively in the making of confectionery. Max Weber's portrait of Walkowitz, done in 1907, and pictures by Maurer, Glenn Coleman, and the Prendergasts were most interesting of the original Independents.

Newcomers, broadly speaking, who show fine things, are more in evidence than usual. Tschachbasov, who only last year had a one-man show devoted in part to abstractions, is represented by a proletarian picture, and a very good one. "The New Deal," with its flattening of forms in the Byzantine manner, its expressive drawing and its humanity, indicates the infinite possibilities in a socially conscious art. Dorothy Eisner's "Time Out" and "Martin" reveal a full-bodied feeling for pigment. Don Freeman, Tamotzu, Irving Lehman, Doris Rosenthal, Ary Stillman, and others are well represented.

J. K.

## OF ALL THINGS

by STEVE MAXIE

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An ape-like woodcarving with red eyes, executed by Warren Wheelock and exhibited at the Independents Show is called "Hearst Sees Red."

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Twenty-four hours after publication of the list of American invitees to the Venice International Art Exhibition came the announcement of the withdrawal of the entire American section. The lack of a rental fee caused many refusals. Members of the Artists Congress, however, in refusing to participate raised the more important issue—relentless war against fascism on every front.

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The Nazi Olympic show, to be held this summer, is in for some rough sledding. The opening broadside in this country was fired by Irwin D. Hoffman. Invited by the American Olympic Line Arts Committee to exhibit, Mr. Hoffman replied in part:

"I consider this invitation an insult to me and to every true artist in this country. You wish me to participate in an exhibition held in a country which has persecuted and ruined its finest artists. . . .

"Now you ask American painters to place the seal of approval on the vile, barbaric civilization of the Nazis. If your committee were more devoted to principles of culture, humanity and art, it would not have the effrontery to insult American artists by such an invitation."

\* \* \*

Senator Dickinson bemoans the fact that most factories canning dog food are not under federal inspection. Twenty per cent of canned dog food, according to the Senator, is eaten by American citizens who cannot afford a more wholesome diet. We quite agree with this humanitarian senator. If Americans must eat dog food, it should by all means have a federal O.K.

\* \* \*

Query by a C.P.C. delegation: Concerning the proportion of women to be laid off as compared with men, Mr. Ring, assistant to W.P.A. Administrator Ridder, assured the delegation that women would get some preference in keeping their jobs. As Mr. Ring put it, "We'd rather make bums than prostitutes."



## ANOTHER PROJECT GRAPHIC SHOW

by ROBERT ULRICH GODSOE

**A** REFURBISHED Federal Art Gallery brings forward a noteworthy show of Graphic Arts and photographs produced under the WPA and, in the case of the prints, for allocation to tax-supported buildings. Innumerable excellent pieces may be singled out but it is a large show and adequate mention of all that is deserving or even commendable would require much space. Even a cursory glance, however, would be bound to bring to light certain really accomplished performances. The show is panoramic, affording a wide-scale survey of what the print-makers are doing and if something is occasionally dull or usual it jostles merit on one hand and power on the other. Will Barnet's portrait "Doris", a lithograph, is sensitive, economic and feelingly rendered. Two wood engraving by Fred Becker, slightly precious, are little miracles in cutting, and George Constant shows two of his finest things, even, tonal and compact. Hubert Davis does well with a more solid Japonesque in his "Trees at Twilight." Mabel Dwight, with vigorous contrast in her "Mulberry Street Marionettes", Eli Jacobi, with a highly effective solution of the problem of detail, Clara Mahl, with some rhythmic but controlled Bentonisms, Kyra Markham, showing burlesque pieces that are compelling and well-organized, Herman Meyer, in a Dantesque "Head", M. Louis Murphy, using a swift-moving, interpolated rhythmic, Mac Raboy, in a solidly rendered bit of drama, and a fierce, driving animation in Refregier's "Mine Accident" are incidents on the program for which I can safely implore your attention. Other good jobs, helping to round out a very much above the average display, are proffered by Fritz Eichenberg, Harold Faye, Alexander King, whose superior zest is always a relief, Hyman Katz, Kuniyoshi in a verve figure piece, Effim Sherman showing etchings of unusual merit done with a nervous line in diffuse pattern, Raphael Soyer, Joseph Vogel, Albert Webb, Oscar Weissbuch, and Ted Witonski. Excellent hanging in a newly redecorated gallery alleviates the strain of a multifold show and enables one to perceive an up-

ward trend in print making amongst the local practitioners. In another room handsome photographs of Washington, D. C., cool, decorous examples, craftsmanlike and deliberate, done by W. Lincoln Highton for the American Guide, a project of the W.P.A., are presented on dead black backgrounds, offering a solution to the usual exhibitor's problem of showing unframed camera work.

## BOOK REVIEW

by HAROLD ROSENBERG

*CUBISM AND ABSTRACT ART*, by Alfred H. Barr Fr. 248 pages, 223 illustrations. Museum of Modern Art Publication. \$3.

**T**HIS thoroughgoing survey of the abstract movement in modern art has been compiled by the director of the Museum of Modern Art as a supplement to the recent retrospective exhibition of abstract art held at the Museum (reviewed in the April ART FRONT by Balcombe Greene). The book is conceived in the spirit of a chronological resume, and is neither critical nor controversial. It outlines the theoretical foundations of each mode or manner developed by the schools and sub-schools of abstractionism, sets out by means of comparative material their major sources and interrelations, and pursues their influence into the neighboring arts of cinema, sculpture, theatre, photography, architecture, posters, typography, and industrial design and construction. Each point in the progression of abstract art is illustrated by black-and-white reproductions of outstanding examples. The book thus provides an excellent basis for the understanding of this movement in modern art, and should be made available in all public libraries and schools.

For those interested in an advanced study of the subject, the volume provides an extensive bibliography of books and magazine-articles in many languages and from many points of view. Mr. Barr fully realizes that a forty years movement in art cannot be presented in a single exhibition or volume without omitting or traversing too sketchily many important aspects. He understands how difficult it is even to pin down the meaning of the term "abstract art." For abstract art, which crystallized out of special ele-

ments of representational art, is constantly climbing out of itself to become something else. A cow is transformed into the "pure art" of a suprematist composition; and then the abstraction returns to nature and utility by becoming a floor covering fitted into the architecture and landscape of a country home. In other words, the artistic process whereby the image became a design always tends to reach a termination and to reverse itself so that design becomes part of a larger image or function. In this sense, as well as in many other respects, the term "abstract art" is inexact and ambiguous, and has more reality as the name of a variegated movement in history than as the definition of a single principle or system of thinking. What is important at the outset, therefore, is to have a good view of the different, and often contradictory, types of effort and accomplishment which have come together to form this stage in art-history. For this purpose, Mr. Barr's compilation furnishes an excellent starting-place.

We may add the wish that it has been economically possible to issue the volume with reproductions in color, and that it could be distributed in such a way as to be accessible to everyone.

## A LETTER FROM SUNNYSIDE

The Provisional Sunnyside Committee wishes to thank the 125 Union Artists for their splendid co-operation in contributing pictures to the Exhibition held for the benefit of the Sunnyside Farmer-Labor Party.

While the Exhibition was a conspicuous financial success, it was the popularization of the Farmer Labor Party that lent the event its greatest significance.

The nationally known struggles of the home owners of Sunnyside, some of them Artist Union members, have not stifled their cultural interests.

The Exhibition was very well attended. All schools of art were equally well represented, each attracting its own crowd of admirers and purchasers, thanks to the accessible prices.

The committee is proud to say that this show, which originally started as a sale, turned out to be an artistic event unique in the history of Queens.

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